



Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994: the health and safety file

(Series: HSE Information Sheet; Construction Sheet No 44)

Introduction

This information sheet gives guidance on the health and safety file which is required to be prepared under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (CDM Regulations).

The CDM Regulations are aimed at improving the overall management and co-ordination of health, safety and welfare throughout all stages of a construction project to reduce the large numbers of serious and fatal accidents and cases of ill health which occur every year in the construction industry.

The CDM Regulations place duties on all those who can contribute to the health and safety of a construction project. Duties are placed upon clients, designers and contractors and the Regulations create a new duty holder - the planning supervisor. They also introduce new documents - health and safety plans and the health and safety file.

The health and safety file is a record of information for the client or the end user which focuses on health and safety. The information it contains will alert those who are responsible for the structure of the key health and safety risks that will need to be dealt with during subsequent maintenance, repair and construction work.

The amount of detail needed in the health and safety file and the time and effort required to prepare it should be in proportion to the scale and complexity of the structure. Structures with minimal health and safety risks will call for simple, straightforward files. Large structures or those involving significant risks will need more detail.

Preparing the health and safety file

The planning supervisor is responsible for ensuring the health and safety file is prepared. Putting together the health and safety file is a task which should ideally be a continual process throughout the project and not left until the construction work is completed.

Early on in the construction project the planning supervisor may find it useful to discuss the health and safety file with the client. This will help determine what information the client requires and how the client wishes the information to be stored and recorded. When the client's requirements are known, procedures may need to be drawn up by the planning supervisor so that all those who will be contributing to the health and safety file (eg designers and contractors) are aware of:

- what information is to be collected;
- how the information is to be collected, presented and stored.

The planning supervisor may find it useful to detail in the pre-tender stage health and safety plan requirements on how and when the information for the health and safety file is to be prepared and passed on. The principal contractor may also find it useful to include similar procedures in the health and safety plan for the construction phase.

Throughout the project those who carry out design work (including contractors) will need to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that information about any feature of the structure which will involve significant risks to health and safety during the structure's lifetime are passed to either the planning supervisor or to the principal contractor. Providing this information on drawings will allow for amendments if any variations arise during construction. It will also allow health and safety information to be stored on one document, therefore reducing the paperwork.

The principal contractor may need to obtain details of services, plant and equipment which are part of the structure from specialist suppliers and installers, eg mechanical and electrical contractors and pass this information on. Contractors have a specific duty in the CDM Regulations to pass information for the health and safety file to the principal contractor, who in turn has to pass it to the planning supervisor. This information could include 'as built' and 'as installed' drawings as well as operation and maintenance manuals.

At the end of the project the planning supervisor has to hand over the health and safety file to the client. In some cases it might not be possible for a fully developed file to be handed over on completion of the project. This may happen because the construction work was finished rapidly to meet a tight deadline and completion of the health and safety file was impossible. Clearly a common sense approach is needed so that the health and safety file is handed over as soon as practical after a completion certificate or similar document has been issued.

Contents of the health and safety file

The contents of the health and safety file will vary depending on the type of structure and the future health and safety risks that will have to be managed. Typical information which may be put in the health and safety file includes:

- 'record' or 'as built' drawings and plans used and produced throughout the construction process;
- the design criteria;
- general details of the construction methods and materials used;
- details of the equipment and maintenance facilities within the structure;
- maintenance procedures and requirements for the structure;
- manuals produced by specialist contractors and suppliers which outline operating and maintenance procedures and schedules for plant and equipment installed as part of the structure;
- details of the location and nature of utilities and services, including emergency and fire-fighting systems.

Future use of the health and safety file

When the project is finished and the health and safety file has been handed over by the planning supervisor, the client should keep it available for those who need to use it. Usually this will include maintenance contractors, the planning supervisor and contractors preparing or carrying out future construction work.

Ideally, the health and safety file should be kept available for inspection on the premises to which it relates. It may be useful to store the health and safety file so that it is in two parts. One part will be more relevant for day to day use, eg operational and maintenance manuals. The other part will be for longer term use, eg drawings which will only be required when major alteration work is carried out. The health and safety file could be stored electronically or on microfiche. In whatever form it is stored, it should be easily accessible.

For ease of reference it may be useful for the planning supervisor to produce a document which summarises the key elements of the health and safety file and acts as a quick guide to where the relevant information is stored.

On a project which involves work on part of a structure for which there is no health and safety file, a file only has to be created in relation to the construction work carried out and not for the whole of the structure. Eventually, as further work is carried out on that structure, the health and safety file will be added to and amended.

If the client sells all or part of the structure, the health and safety file, or the relevant parts of the health and safety file, should be passed to the new owner.

Law

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994

References and further information

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 SI 1994 No 3140 HMSO 1995 ISBN 0 11 043845 0

HSC Managing construction for health and safety Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 Approved Code of Practice L54 HSE Books 1995 ISBN 0 7176 0792 5

HSC A guide to managing health and safety in construction HSE Books 1995 ISBN 0 7176 0755 0

Construction Information Sheets:

- No 39 The role of the client
- No 40 The role of the planning supervisor
- No 41 The role of the designer
- No 42 The pre-tender stage health and safety plan
- No 43 The health and safety plan during the construction phase

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